

REMARKS

Claims 2-20 are pending. Claims 7 and 8 were previously withdrawn such that claims 2-6 and 9-20 are currently at issue.

Initially, the indication that claim 4 recites allowable subject matter is noted with appreciation. Accordingly, claim 4 is rewritten in independent form to recite the limitations of its base claim 16 such that claim 4 should now be in condition for allowance.

Claim 14 is amended to address the objection thereto.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, and 15-20 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0033321 to Miyako, et al. Claims 10, 11 and 14 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Miyako, et al.

The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 16 is directed to a steering wheel for mounting of a build-on part thereto and calls for a steering wheel skeleton, and a foam material surrounding the skeleton. Claim 16 further requires a holding part that is fixed relative to the skeleton by the foam material. The holding part includes a first portion that is fixed within the foam material against removal therefrom and a second portion that projects from the foam material for mounting of the build-on part thereto. The cited reference does not disclose or suggest a holding part fixed relative to a steering wheel skeleton by foam material, as called for in claim 16.

More particularly, Miyako, et al. teach two embodiments, one shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 and the other shown in FIGS. 3 and 4, neither of which show a holding part that is fixed to the steering wheel skeleton by foam material, as recited in claim 16. In the Action, it is asserted that the lower cover 12 of the first embodiment of the switch 3 disclosed by Miyako, et al. is of foam material. However, Miyako, et al. do not disclose that this cover is formed of foam material but instead state that it has retaining portions 13 which keep the plastic mounting hooks 19 from shifting outwardly relative

to each other so that they do not release from the steering wheel core metal 11 (see paragraph [0024]). As can be seen in FIG. 1, the retaining portions 13 have an elongate, thin cross-sectional configuration similar to that of the plastic mounting hooks 9 against which they are engaged. Presumably, if the lower cover 12 including the retaining portion 13 thereof were a foam material such long, thin foam retaining portions would not function as described by Miyako, et al. to resist outward shifting of the similarly configured, more rigid plastic mounting hooks. Moreover, when Miyako, et al. do disclose foam material, the foam or soft material 22 of the second embodiment is shown with dots in FIG. 4 to indicate the type of material thereof, whereas the lower cover 12 is shown with hatched lines similar to the plastic casing 4 of the first embodiment.

With respect to the second embodiment of Miyako, et al. shown in FIGs. 3 and 4, it is clear that the foam material 22 does not hold the switch 3. Rather it is the engagement of the hooks 21 and specifically the end projections 21b thereof against the core metal 11 of the steering wheel that keep the switch 3 from being pulled out of the hole 23 in the foam material 22 and the aligned hole 24 in the core metal 11. Thus, it is clear that Miyako, et al. do not disclose or suggest a holding part that is fixed relative to a steering wheel skeleton by foam material, as is required in claim 16.

In addition, the holding part identified in the Action, i.e., the switch outer casing 4 and mounting hooks 9 thereof of the first embodiment, and mounting hooks 21 of the outer casing 4 of the second embodiment, are part of the switch 3 which corresponds to the recited build-on part and not the recited holding part. The casing mounting hooks are not holding parts as contemplated in claim 16, but rather are part of the build-on part or switch of Miyako, et al. One advantage of the invention is that a build-on part such as a switch can be fixed to a separate holding part. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 16, and claims 2-6, 9-15, and 17-20 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over Miyako, et al.

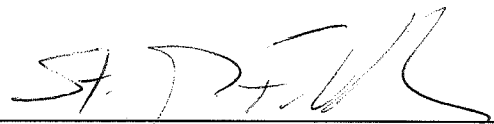
Application No. 10/802,401
Amendment dated September 19, 2006
Reply to Office Action of December 19, 2006

Several of the dependent claims recite limitations which further delineate over Miyako, et al. For instance, claim 3 calls for adhesive between the holding part and the steering wheel skeleton for adhesively bonding the holding part to the steering wheel skeleton. Miyako, et al. fail to disclose or suggest adhesive bonding the switch 3 to the steering wheel core 11. Dependent claim 6 calls for the holding part to have a U-shaped configuration of substantially constant cross-sectional thickness adjacent the steering wheel skeleton. In the Action, it was stated that the mounting hooks 9 along with the base of the outer casing 4 extending between the hooks 9 form a U-shaped configuration. However, as can be seen in FIG. 1, the base portion of the outer casing 4 extending between the hooks 9 is thicker than the hooks themselves. Accordingly, it is believed that claims 3 and 6 are allowable over Miyako, et al. for these additional reasons.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 2-6 and 9-20 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: December 19, 2006

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